

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 521

By Gilmore

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of the Honorable Adolpho A. Birch, Jr., former Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of the Honorable Adolpho A. Birch, Jr., former Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, who so ably served the people of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the first African-American to serve as the Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, Justice Adolpho A. Birch, Jr., was a dedicated and highly respected jurist who leaves an indelible legacy of service at every level of the judiciary in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the first African-American elected to a Nashville judgeship, A. A. Birch began his judicial career in 1969 as a General Sessions Court judge in Davidson County. In 1978, he was elected to serve as judge for the Criminal Court of Davidson County and was named presiding judge for the Trial Courts of Davidson County for 1981-1982; and

WHEREAS, recognized for his wisdom and legal expertise, Justice Birch was appointed to the Court of Criminal Appeals by Governor Ned McWherter in April of 1987. He later won election to that position in 1988 and again in 1990; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his distinguished judicial career, Justice Birch was appointed by Governor McWherter to a seat on the esteemed Tennessee Supreme Court in 1992; and

WHEREAS, Justice Birch rose to the post of Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, serving in that capacity from 1996-1997, and he took his much deserved retirement from the bench in 2006; and

WHEREAS, Adolpho Birch was born in Washington, D.C., on September 22, 1932; he graduated from Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., and attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania from 1950 until 1952; and

WHEREAS, Justice Birch earned both his Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctorate degrees from Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he was a distinguished member of the Howard Law Review; and

WHEREAS, upon his graduation from law school, Justice Birch served on active duty with the U.S. Naval Reserve from 1956 until 1958, when he began his legal career in private practice; and

WHEREAS, he operated his private practice until 1966, during which time Justice Birch also served as assistant public defender in Davidson County from 1963 to 1966.. He stood as the assistant district attorney general for Davidson County from 1966 to 1969; and

WHEREAS, a member of the Court of the Judiciary in Tennessee from 1983 to 1986, Justice Birch was a respected member of the National Bar Association Judicial Council, the Tennessee Bar Association, the Nashville Bar Association, and the Napier-Looby Bar Association; and

WHEREAS, a member of the faculty at the Nashville School of Law and the University of Memphis Distinguished Jurist in Residence, he also shared his legal expertise as an associate professor of Legal Medicine at Meharry Medical College and as a lecturer in law at Fisk University and Tennessee State University; and

WHEREAS, as a fitting tribute in recognition of his distinguished service to the citizens of Nashville and Davidson County, the general sessions and criminal courts building in Davidson County was named in his honor in 2006; and

WHEREAS, devoted to his family, Justice Birch was the proud father of Andrea Birch, Angela Birch Cox, and Adolpho A. Birch III and the beloved grandfather of Michael, Erin, Elena, and John; and

WHEREAS, Justice A. A. Birch will be sadly mourned, but fondly remembered, by his brother, Kennard Birch, and a vast multitude of extended family, dear friends, former colleagues, and admirers across Tennessee and this great nation; and

WHEREAS, Adolpho A. Birch, Jr., leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, seldom do gentlemen of his stature walk among us, and it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the extraordinary life of Justice Adolpho A. Birch Jr.; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of the Honorable Adolpho A. Birch, Jr., reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Justice Birch.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation to the family of Justice Birch, with this final clause omitted from such copy.